



Fact Sheet

California Environmental Protection Agency



Air Resources Board

Outdoor Residential Waste Burning Air Toxic Control Measure

Why is the ARB Concerned About Residential Waste Burning?

- Residential waste burning is the practice of outdoor burning of household garbage and rubbish associated with one and two unit family homes. Typically, 55-gallon metal drums known as burn barrels are used for this burning.
- The smoke and ash created by these fires contain many toxic pollutants, including dioxins and furans (collectively referred to as dioxins). These toxic pollutants can travel long distances and contaminate air, water, food, and soil where they may last in the environment for many years.
- These toxic pollutants can also accumulate in the fat of animals and fish, which is then passed on to people when contaminated food is eaten.
- Dioxins can cause cancer, immune system damage, and other health effects. Infants and young children may be especially vulnerable to dioxin exposure according to the State Office of Environmental Health and Hazard Assessment. The smoke produced by burn barrels may also cause other health effects, such as triggering asthma attacks. Other cancer causing pollutants such as benzene and 1,3-butadiene are also generated.
- About 800,000 households in California are allowed to burn some form of household waste in burn barrels. This burning is one of the largest sources of dioxins in California.
- While other dioxin sources such as municipal and medical waste incinerators have strict pollution controls, household waste burning does not.

What Steps is ARB Considering to Reduce Emissions?

- ARB is working with a broad cross-section of stakeholders to develop an air toxic control measure to reduce the emissions of dioxins and other toxic pollutants from residential waste burning.
- Stakeholders contributing to control measure development include air district representatives, local waste management agencies, the State Integrated Waste Management Board, fire protection agencies, the California Office of Environmental Health and Hazard Assessment, and the general public.

What Does the Proposed Control Measure Require?

Some of the key elements included in the proposed control measure include:

- Eliminating outdoor residential burning of all household waste except vegetation.
- Eliminating the use of burn barrels because they facilitate the illegal burning of waste materials.
- Requiring all burning to take place on a day authorized for burning by an air district.
- Providing exemptions in rural areas that lack alternatives.

What Exemptions are Allowed?

We are proposing to allow exemptions in very rural areas throughout the State that meet the following criteria:

- The area lacks available waste pickup service at a reasonable cost, and
- The area is more than a reasonable distance from a transfer station or landfill, and
- The expected public exposure would be low.

The air district Board must approve a request for exemption, and the request must be supported with documentation and maps identifying each exemption area. The ARB must approve the exemption. The air district must revisit exempt area eligibility every five years to demonstrate the exemption criteria continue to apply.

When Would the Control Measure Take Effect?

The control measure would be effective statewide July 1, 2003. However, air districts requesting exemptions would have until March 1, 2003 to submit a request for an exemption to ARB.

How Can You Get Involved?

ARB staff will take a recommended control measure to the Board in February 2002. Workshops on the draft regulation will be held at various locations within the State beginning in December 2001 and January 2002. For the time and location of the workshop nearest you, visit ARB's Residential Burning Website at:

<http://www.arb.ca.gov/smp/resburn/resburn.htm>

If you would like more information, you may contact ARB's Public Information Office at (916) 322-2990.

If you are a person with disability and desire to obtain this document in an alternative format, please contact the Air Resources Board Coordinator at (916) 323-4916. Persons with hearing or speech impairments can contact us by using our Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (916) 324-9531, or (800) 700-8326 for TDD calls from outside the Sacramento area.

The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut your energy costs, see our Website: <http://www.arb.ca.gov>.